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## **REGENTS APPROVE TOBACCO TRUST FUND RESEARCH PROJECTS**

**BATON ROUGE** -- Almost \$7.75 million for funding nine health care sciences research proposals by a trust fund established with proceeds from the state's tobacco settlement was approved by the Board of Regents at its May 25 board meeting.

In October 1999, Louisiana voters, in deciding how proceeds from the tobacco settlement agreement would be allocated, approved the Millennium Trust Health Excellence Fund (HEF) to support clinical and laboratory research in advanced health care sciences in Louisiana universities and members of the state's Medical Education Commission.

The Regents awarded grants to the LSU Health Sciences Center in New Orleans for five proposals; LSU and A&M College, for two proposals, and the Pennington Biomedical Research Center in Baton Rouge and the Tulane University Medical Center, one each.

Seventy-nine proposals from 14 institutions requesting over \$80.7 million were submitted to the Regents. Proposals underwent a three-stage competitive review process in which they were first reviewed by out-of-state mail reviewers, followed by panels of out-of-state experts with broad expertise in the disciplines represented by the proposals.

Twenty-nine proposals recommended for further consideration were forwarded to a final panel, composed of the chairs of the stage two panels, which met for two days to select the final nine proposals recommended for funding.

Noting that the Health Excellence Fund could be used as a model for other states that have received tobacco settlement funds, the final panel also complimented the state of Louisiana "for its vision and foresight in utilizing a

significant portion of its tobacco settlement money to enhance health care in the state."

The funded proposals are:

- LSU Health Sciences Center-N.O. -- "Molecular Science of Craniofacial Biology, Infection and Mucosal Immunity," a proposal to develop a program in the newly formed Center of Excellence in Oral and Craniofacial Biology to enhance the oral health of Louisiana residents, Paul J. Fidel Jr., principal investigator (PI);
- LSU Health Sciences Center-N.O. -- "Genetic Studies in the Acadian Population," to establish a Center of Genome Science and Molecular Medicine, a genomic research and technology development initiative in biomedics focusing on the Acadian population of Louisiana which, because of its geographical and social isolation, has a relatively small gene pool and an excessive prevalence of a number of hereditary diseases, Bronya J.B. Keats, PI;
- LSU Health Sciences Center-N.O. -- "The Role of Inflammation in Cancer Development," to explore the mechanism by which inflammation modulates the gastric carcinoma process, Pelayo Correa, PI;
- LSU Health Sciences Center-N.O. -- "Occupational Medicine Research Center," to focus on basic, applied, clinical and industrial research related to injuries, disorders and disability with the intent to develop programs that will effectively treat and prevent such injuries, Moshe Solomonow, PI; and the
- LSU Health Sciences Center-N.O. -- "Center for Lung Biology and Immunotherapy," to study how immune factors in the host interact with virulence factors of pathogens in the attack of the respiratory system and to translate this understanding into clinical trials of immunotherapy in human subjects, Judd Shellito, PI;
- LSU -- "Biological Computation and Visualization," an interdisciplinary center for computational analysis, mathematical modeling, and visualization of anatomical and physiological data, Harold Silverman, PI;
- LSU -- "Smoking among LSU and Southern University Undergraduates: Causes and Elimination," to determine why some college students smoke and what types of information and support are required to help them quit, Judith

Sylvester, PI.

- Pennington Biomedical Research Center -- "Gene-Based Discovery of New Therapeutic Targets for the Treatment of Obesity and Comorbidities," a comprehensive program of gene discovery related to obesity and the commercialization of such genes in the treatment of obesity, David A. York, PI;
- Tulane University Medical Center -- "Acadian Coalition of Teens Against Tobacco," to develop, implement and evaluate a school-based tobacco prevention program in Louisiana schools throughout the state, Carolyn Johnson, PI.

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